CHURCH NEWS

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

Edited by
THE NORTHERN ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE
Sigtuna, Sweden

Director: Dr. HARRY JOHANSSON, Sigtuna, Sweden
Editor: Rev. JOHS. LANGHOFF, Øster Egesborg per Mern, Denmark

No. 39 June 30th, 1958.

Common Northern Hymn-Book for Seamen.

The Northern Seamen's Church Council has published a hymn-book to be used in common by seamen from the Northern countries and edited by the Danish minister to seamen, Rev. F.V. Eilschou-Holm, and the Secretary of the Swedish Mission to Seamen, Lars Carlzon. The hymn-book, at present printed in 10.000 copies, contains a number of hymns and spiritutal songs well-known in all the Northern countries. It is called "Northern Hymns" and will be issued to all the seamen's homes and churches belonging to the Northern Missions to Seamen all over the world where it will be used at meetings and church services. It is, furthermore, intended for the private use of seamen on board the ships and is provided with fine illustrations.

More Northern Church Meetings and Conferences.

During the summer there will be a number of Northern religious meetings and conferences. Besides those already mentioned previously the following will also take place:

From June 5th - 9th the Northern hospital chaplains met for a congress in Oslo at which reports were read on the situation in the various countries. Bishop Johannes Smemo lectured on the spiritual renewal of clergymen, and Dr. Harald Frøshaug, Medical Superintendent, spoke on the ecclesiastical service in hospitals. There was also a Round-Table discussion among representatives of the Christian Medical Association, the Christian Nurses' Association, and the Brotherhoods of Deacons.

A meeting "on the foundation of the Bible" will be held at Molde, Norway, from July 24th - 28th for older and younger university trained people. The meeting is arranged by Home Mission circles in Norway, but the speakers will also include men from the other Northern countries. Among these will be Professor Ole Hallesby, Oslo; the new Secretary General of the Norwegian Missionary Society, Fridjov Birkeli; and Mission Director Nils Dahlberg, Sweden.

From August 6th - 11th the Christian Student Movements in the Northern countries will conduct a Christian students' meeting at Hillerød, Denmark. Such joint Northern meetings are held every third year. The main theme at the meeting will be "God's World

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and Man's World" and besides a number of speakers from the Northern countries there will also be addresses by Bishop Leslie Newbigin from India and Professor Hendrik Kraemer.

From August 18th - 23rd a joint Northern course for leaders of the Christian youth organizations will take place at Sigtuna, Sweden, at which will be discussed, amongst other things, the connection between the candidates for confirmation and Christian activities among young people, the training of paid leaders, evangelization among young people, and the importance of church plays in this work.

DENMARK

On the Way Towards a Danish Free Church in South Slesvig.

At its meeting last month the South Slesvig Synod which is the joint organ of all the Danish congregations south of the Danish-German frontier decided to work for the establishment of a Danish free church under the name of "The Danish National Church in South Slesvig". Of the 125 members of the Synod entitled to vote only 3 were against the decision.

Until now a great number of the members of the Danish congregations have remained members of the Slesvig-Holstein Provincial Church and have paid church taxes although they took part in the Danish church services. The reason for this is that the German church, in spite of national differences, is regarded as "the Church of the Fathers" and, naturally, the church building itself played a big part in this feeling. Both the Provincial Church and the Danish National Church are Lutheran churches.

The plan is, therefore, also to proceed slowly with the establishment of the Danish free church, independent of the Provincial Church. In the resolution passed by the Synod the Church Council is requested to "start an information campaign everywhere in South Slesvig with regard to the establishment of a 'Danish National Church in South Slesvig' and the rights and duties of the members of such a church". Only then is the Church Council "to collect the necessary statistics and prepare a draft of rules as a basis for an application to the Provincial Government for the recognition of 'The Danish National Church in South Slesvig' ".

The Slesvig-Holstein Provincial Church has suggested several times before that a Danish free church should be established, but so far Danish circles have not felt justified in demanding that all who joined the Danish congregations should resign from the German Provincial Church.

The Danish congregations in South Slesvig employ 25 clergymen who conduct religious services in churches, school premises, and similar places - altogether 107 different places.

Contact Meeting Between Clergymen and Journalists.

At the end of May a meeting for representatives of the church and the press was held at the new journalist college in Aarhus. The meeting was planned by a committee made up by members from both sides and about 50 people took part. The meeting was opened by Bishop Gudmund Sondrup Hoeskilde, and the Editor Andreas Blaauw, Kolding. Among the speakers at the meeting were also Bishop Carl Vibora, and Bishop Skat Hoffmeyer, Aarhus. Such subjects as "Does the Church Need the Press" and "Does the Press Need the Church?" were lively discussed. The criticism voiced from both sides was positively inclined in as much as it was generally agreed that a better and more inspiring collaboration between the church and the press was to be desired and that the work for such future contact meetings should be continued.

Controversy About Allowing Mormons to Photograph Parish Registers.

Despite the protests of all the Bishops the Danish Ministry of Church Affairs has directed the clergymen in a departmental circular to hand the parish registers in their possession to the regional record offices where Mormons will be allowed to have them photographed in order to use the information at their baptisms by proxy of deceased persons. The Church Ministry's decision has caused indignation in wide circles and several clergymen have declared that they will refuse to hand over the parish registers for such a purpose. So far some of the Bishops have omitted to forward the circular to the clergymen and at the Bishops' Council this month it will be discussed which course to adopt in the case of open controversies on this matter.

The parish registers kept by the clergymen in the Danish National Church are civil registers as well, as they, besides the records of church ceremonies, also contain the records of births, deaths, and marriages. Thirty years after their being written full they are to be handed in by the clergymen to the regional archives where they are kept because of their biographical value.

As is well known, the Mormons believe that people who have died without any knowledge of Mormonism may become members of the church through baptism by proxy. In consequence of this the Mormons have established genealogical societies with the purpose of obtaining information about the deceased relatives of now living Mormons. In 1939 the Genealogical Institute in Utah approached the State Public Record Office in Denmark and offered to finance the photographing in two copies of all the parish registers kept in the regional record offices against being allowed to keep the one copy. In spite of the misgivings expressed by church circles the State accepted the offer on account of the substantial economies involved in as much as the State would otherwise have had to finance the job of preserving the valuable material by photographing the records.

The Genealogical Society in Utah has now applied for permission to photograph also the parish registers still kept in the vicarages on the understanding, however, that the copy to the Mormons should not be available until 50 years have elapsed since the completion of the individual parish records. For reasons of economy the Ministry of Education, in charge of the record offices, was interested in this application while the Bishops, when consulted by the Ministry

of Church Affairs, in very sharp terms dissociated themselves from the idea. The Ministry of Church Affairs, nevertheless, gave the permission to photograph the records on the ground that the parish records would be accessible to the public anyway after 30 years. In a statement published in the Periodical of the Clergymen's Association the Minister of Church Affairs, Mrs. Bodil Koch, describes the photographing of newer parish records as "an insignificant detail in the matter of principle" decided upon in 1939.

Many church circles, however, are strongly against the decision of the Church Ministry. Thus, the former Minister of Church Affairs, Dean Carl Hermansen, is strongly opposed to it in a sharply worded article in the weekly Danish Church Times and among the other protests a statement by 500 members of parochial councils in South Jutland is noteworthy: "We consider it wrong to let our parish records be photographed for the use by a non-Christian sect which practises baptism by proxy of deceased persons who were properly baptized in the Danish Lutheran National Church where this baptism constitutes one of the foundations of our Faith." In a number of articles the "Kristeligt Dagblad" supports the Bishops and expresses its disapproval of the Ministry of Church Affairs placing the interests of the State before the interests of the Church.

Religious Retreat to be Established at Løgumkloster.

The plans for an ecclesiastical retreat (recreation and rest centre) at Løgumkloster, South Jutland, may now be carried out in real life after the Government having given building permission and having granted a loan of 800.000 Danish crowns. Circles interested in the retreat have collected 600.000 Danish corwns towards its establishment. The institution will be set up in connection with the old monastery and chapel at Løgumkloster. There will be 29 rooms and 5 apartments consisting of 1 1/2 rooms. An essential part of the activities of the retreat will be devotional services, Bible study classes and lectures.

Prominent Cleric Died.

Dean Povl Helweg-Larsen, Copenhagen, has died, 80 years old. For a number of years he was the enterprising and efficient Secretary General of the Copenhagen Church Foundation. From 1938-1941 he was the Religious Editor of "Kristeligt Dagblad".

FINLAND

Conference About Vocational Institutions and Christian Education.

The question of vocational training has become evermore topical and important in Finland and the question has come up both in circles interested in vocational training and among people working for a Christian education whether the vocational schools ought not, besides their vocational instruction to give also a certain ethical and religious education.

In order to discuss this problem the Centre for Christian Education recently arranged a meeting in Helsinki (Helsingfors) for the leaders of the country's vocational institutions. In an address

at the conference Mr. O. Isakallio of the National School Board emphasized how important it is that the vocational schools do not destroy the Christian upbringing of the public schools, but purposefully aim at helping the students to a Christian outlook on life. The President of the Centre, Professor E. Kansanaho, noted that essential changes in education have taken place during the past few decades. For one thing, education is to-day primarily considered from the point of view of the child, and for another, an extensive specialization has taken place in the course of which the spiritual and religious education has often been neglected in favour of the vocational, physical and social education. Mr. K. Tammio, Secretary of the Centre for Christian Education, stressed the point that religious education is an organic part of general education and emphasized that the spirit of the school on the whole had the greatest influence. He thought it would be difficult to find room in the schedule for special religious classes.

Finnish Invitation to the Lutheran World Federation.

It was decided at the Extended Bishops' Council last month to invite the Lutheran World Federation to hold its next General Assembly in Finland. The Assembly will take place in 1963.

Finland Wood Planted in Israel.

The Finnish Carmel Association has begun planting a Finland Wood of cypresses in Haruwith as a greeting from Finland to the State of Israel on its 10-years' anniversary. The funds for this have been collected by the Carmel Association and the Jewish congregations in Finland. The planting of the Wood was inaugurated by a ceremony at which the Director General of the Jewish National Foundation, amongst others, was present and the grounds were decorated with Finnish and Israelitic flags.

Four Churches Burnt Down - Five New Ones Being Built.

No less than four churches have burnt down during the past four months, viz. the churches in Leivonmäki, Kokkola (Gamla Karleby), Orivesi and the German church in Helsinki (Helsingfors). The three first ones were built of wood and burned down to the ground. The church in Orivesi was considered by many to be the most beautiful wooden church in Finland. The fire here was started by two intoxicated persons. In the autumn the German church in Helsinki (Helsingfors) was to have celebrated the centenary of the official confirmation of the Germancongregation, but the celebrations will now be postponed until the damages, amounting to 30 million Finnish marks, have been repaired.

At the moment five new churches are under construction, viz. the churches in Seinäjoki, Vuoksenniska, Kauhajoki, Lauttasaari and Kuusamo Käylä.

Finnish Monument Unveiled in Stockholm.

Last month a monument was unveiled in the Katarina Cemetery in Stockholm in memory of the many Finns who have worked in Sweden in the course of time. Speakers at the function, at which a number of Finnish and Swedish representatives were present, were Bishop O.K.

Heliövaara, Oulu (Uleåborg), Finland, the Finnish Ambassador in Stockholm, P.K. Tarjanne, Mr. Volmar Bergh, Finland, and Rev. Gottfrid Sevelius, Stockholm.

Lutheran-Orthodox Conference in Järvenpää.

An ecumenical conference to which is attached great importance took place last month at the Finnish Laymen's Institute at Järvenpää where Orthodox and Lutheran representatives met for a common discussion on "The New Understanding of Mutual Responsibility". The conference was arranged by the Finska Allmänkyrkliga Kommittén (Finnish Ecumenical Committee) in collaboration with the Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches in Bossey (Switzerland). The two subjects particularly under discussion were inter-marriage between Orthodox and Lutheran Christians and the treatment of the two denominations in school text-books. A committee was set up by the conference which, on the basis of the deliberations of the conference, is to make suggestions to the congregations for spiritual guidance with regard to mixed marriages. In a communication to the school authorities it is requested that the text-books show consideration for the teachings of both the Lutheran and the Orthodox Churches since both are recognized by the State.

A delegation from the Russian Orthodox Church had been invited, but none turned up.

Industrial Seminar for Clergymen and Women Theologians.

From September 1st the Industrial Committee of the Finnish Congregational Union has arranged for a three months' seminar for clergymen and women theologians. The first four weeks the seminar takes place at the Laymen's Institute and thereafter there will be a 6-weeks' tour and study of various factories. The members will finally meet again at the Institute in order to exchange experiences and discuss future tasks.

Amendment of Legislation Regarding Days of Prayer Rejected.

The Finnish Parliament has rejected a Bill proposing an amendment of the legislation regarding Days of Prayer. The Bill was introduced by the Social Democratic Member, V. Turunen, who wanted a modification of the ban on amusements now in force with regard to the four annual Days of Prayer ordered by the President of Finland. The Bill was rejected with a majority of a few votes.

New Editor of "Kotimaa".

The present Chief Editor of the Christian newspaper "Kotimaa", Mr. Armo Nokkala, has been appointed Ecclesiastic Councillor by the Extended Bishops' Council. As his successor as chief editor the Board of Directors have now appointed Professor in Old Testament Exegesis, Aarre Lauha, who will also continue his work as professor.

Professor Alanen Retires.

One of Finland's prominent representatives in the ecumenical world, Professor in Ethics and Philosophy of Religion at the University of Helsinki (Helsingfors), Dr. Yrjö J. Alanen, has passed the retiring age and consequently finished his work at the University.

ICELAND

Well-Known Divinity Professor Died.

Professor Magnus Jónsson from the theological faculty at the University of Reykjavik has died, 70 years old. For a number of years the Professor was a Member of Parliament and for some years Member of the Government. He was the author of a number of theological books, especially on church history.

NORWAY

New Common Hymn-Book in Norway?

The Norwegian Hymn-Book Committee which was set up in 1955 by the Ministry of Church Affairs is unanimous in suggesting the introduction of a new hymn-book common to the whole Lutheran National Church instead of the present two hymn-books of which the one is in "book language" (Landstad's Hymnal) and the other in "new-Norwegian". It is proposed to co-ordinate the hymns in the two hymn-books so that whenever the hymns exist in both language forms, both the versions will be printed in the new hymn-book.

An investigation by the Committee shows that "Landstad's Hymnal" is used in 72,6% of the parishes comprising 86,8% of the population while the "new-Norwegian" hymn-book is used in 27,4% of the parishes or by 13,2% of the population.

The Committee has made inquiries among parochial councils, clergymen, and church organizations and although only 1068 of the 2600 questionnaires sent out have been returned there seems to be no doubt about the general feeling. 86,2% of the answers went in for a common hymn-book and almost the same number wanted the hymns to be printed side by side in the two versions in the same copy. A great majority of the answers, viz. 69,9% of those from parochial councils and 76,4% of the clergymen voted for the hymns in the new hymn-book being arranged according to contents and not according to the ecclesiastical year as at present.

The weekly "Vår Kirke" published by the Oslo Home Mission does not feel that the Committee's proposal should be adopted. In a leading article it says that the shortcomings of the two old hymn-books are so great that a co-ordination is no real solution of the problem. The paper advocates the continued use of both hymn-books until a really satisfactory hymn-book may be compiled after a thorough preparation.

New Education Bill to be Debated in the Autumn at the Earliest.

The Education Bill introduced by the Norwegian Government, which, as mentioned in CN Nos. 37 and 38, at a number of points weakens the traditional connection between Church and School, will be debated in Parliament in the autumn at the very earliest. Since the publication of the Bill the Parliamentary Church and Education Committee has been assailed by protests against its contents. Not only have a number of voluntary church organizations joined in the protest of the Bishops, but also parochial councils, school authori-

ties, and local public meetings all over the country have sent in resolutions of protest.

"Only seldom has such opposition been aroused in the nation as by this Bill", writes the "Morgenbladet" in Oslo. Together with several others of the Opposition's publications the paper wanted the Bill to be withdrawn altogether and replaced by a new one which has been properly prepared by a commission after consultation with all parties concerned.

It now turns out that the Government Bill has been drafted by a small group of purely Labour Party people and that not even leading persons in the Education Department had any knowledge of its contents before it was available in proof-sheets. This is being strongly criticized by the Opposition.

More Stringent Legislation on Pornography in Norway?

The ban on the much discussed book "The Song of the Red Ruby" by the Norwegian author Agnar Mykle which was imposed on it after its having been declared immoral by the Oslo city court last autumn has now been raised again following upon the decision by the Supreme Court last month, with 12 votes against 3, that it was not in contravention of the Pornography Act.

The new verdict was received with distaste in wide circles. Thus, the Christian daily newspaper in Oslo "Vårt Land" writes that hereafter the pornographical liberty of authors is close to being without limits. "The safeguarding by the Law against obscenity has been removed", the paper writes.

Occasioned by the consequences which may result from the judgement of the Supreme Court the organization "Kristelig Folkeoplysning" (Christian National Enlightment) has requested Parliament to make the Pornography Act more stringent.

Big Teaching Centre Opened by the Baptists.

At the end of this month a new big teaching centre will be opened in Baerum by the Norwegian Baptist Society which will accommodate the theological seminary, a school for young people and a secondary school course. The buildings alone have cost 2,7 million Norwegian crowns and include, among other things, an aula which will seat 300 people.

During summer when the school premises are not in use they will be rented out for meetings and conferences, just as it is also the plan to run a boarding-house when the school is not in operation.

The World's Northernmost Church.

Bishop Alf Wiig, Hålogaland Diocese, recently consecrated the new church in Gamvik which, so far, is the northernmost church in the world. At its actual completion it will have cost app. 430.000 Norwegian crowns. There will be room for 250 people in the nave and an adjoining congregational hall will seat another 80 people.

When the proposed church on Svalbard is finished it will become the world's northernmost church.

New Christian-Cultural Institution Established in Trondheim.

A Christian-cultural institution called the St. Olav Foundation has been opened in Trondheim in northern Norway as a parallel to the Church Academy in Oslo.

The idea for such a foundation was put forward three years ago by Dean Sigurd Fjaer who in a statement to the Christian daily paper in Oslo describes the aim of the St. Olav Foundation as being the furthering of a richer Christian culture. "We wish to create a spiritual centre on an evangelical foundation in co-operation with other cultural institutions in the town, as for instance, the Scientific Society, the Museum of Decorative Arts, and the Teachers' High School", the Dean states.

SWEDEN

High Church Confessional Front If Women Pastors Are Accepted.

It has caused wide attention in Sweden that a group of High Church clergymen led by Rev. Gunnar Rosendal, vicar of Osby, are planning to set up a "confessional front" within the Lutheran National Church if the Church Convocation in the autumn should accept the Act about women's access to take holy orders.

In an article in "Circular Letter for Church Renewal" Rev. G. Rosendal states the background for these thoughts and says, amongst other things, that the bishop or bishops who agree to ordain women will lose the confidence of wide circles within the Church. It must be expected that a "confessional front" will be established in the Church whose members will be bound to refuse collaboration with bishops, clergymen, deacons and laymen who accept women pastors. As an example of the practical consequences of such a step it says: "If a member of the 'front' is asked to give an address at a conference in which a bishop, who has ordained a woman, is to take part, he should refuse to be present himself. If his own bishop should ordain women he should obey his bishop impeccably and reverently, but refuse all duties which he is not obliged by his office to perform and otherwise keep away from his bishop as much as possible without overstepping ecclesiastical correctness in behaviour, but with ardent prayers in his heart and in the living compassion of Christ with his bishop".

Rev. G. Rosendal describes the "confessional front" as consisting of "those who have not bent their knees to Baal" and intimates that the ecclesiastical members of the "front" should resign from the Swedish Clergymen's Association and from their own association. "The establishment of such a front", it says in the article, "will constitute a breach in the Swedish Church, but a sound breach because it will be an expression of the inner rupture and the schism resulting from the ordination of women pastors."

The Swedish bishops were assembled at the beginning of this month in order to go over the many statements received in answer to the inquiries made to church organizations and other organizations about their views on the question of women pastors. The great majority of the answers viz. 27, were in favour of admitting women to ecclesiastical offices while 4 were opposed to it and 9 did not want to commit themselves.

Bishop Hultgren New Archbishop?

The appointment of Sweden's new archbishop is expected shortly and it is considered likely that Bishop Gunnar Hultgren, Härnösand, who obtained most votes at the election last month, will be chosen. The Government is, however, free to choose among him and the two next candidates at the election, viz. Bishop Torsten Ysander, Linköping, and Bishop Helge Ljungberg, Stockholm.

At the same time the appointment of the new Bishop of Lund may be expected. The result of the election here was that Dean Ragnar Askmark, Gothenburg, Dean Nils Bolander, Lund, and Dr. Martin Lindström, Lundsberg, are heading the list of candidates.

The Concept of "Punishment" Should be Maintained in Legal Language.

In a statement to the Ministry of Justice the Swedish Ecumenical Council advocates that the concept of punishment should be preserved in legal language, and gives a detailed account of its views. The statement is occasioned by the publication of a proposal for a new "Protection Act" (formerly "Punishment Act") by the Penal Code Commission. From a purely objective point of view the Council acknowledges the importance attached by the Commission to the welfare work aiming at the social readjustment of criminals and feels that considerably larger sums than hitherto should be made available for such efforts in the future. But it is criticized that the designation "Punishment Act" has been changed to "Protection Act" as the word "protection" may be understood in such a way that offenders against the Law are regarded only as inferior and sick persons. From the very point of view of the absolute human value of each individual it is important that the Law presupposes the responsibility of the individual and that such realities as guilt and atonement are not lost from sight. The therapeutic value of punishment may lie in the very emphasis on personal responsibility. In this way punishment may be of a healing quality. The therapeutic is necessary both in regard to a lack of sense of guilt as well as to a morbid and false sense of guilt must aim at real atonement and not only at temporary measures if the individuals concerned are really to be fitted for society once more. In this connection the concept of "protection" is not satisfactory, either.

At the same time the Ecumenical Council turns down all linking together of punishment with the idea of retribution in the traditional sense of the word.

Prominent Baptist Against "Associate Congregations".

A Committee set up by the Mission Board of the Baptist Society has warned against Baptists taking part in free church fellowship with Christians who were baptized as infants. The reason for this warning is that in several large towns congregations have been established during recent years in connection with one of the free churches, the members of which congregations may become "associate members" without resigning from their own communities if these communities do not own a church building in the locality.

The Committee consists of Mission Superintendent Erik Rudén, Professor Westin and Rev. Simon Öberg. It is true that each individual congregation is independent of the Society and that the Mission Board cannot, consequently, dictate its views to the individual community, but it is expected that the statement will be of a certain consultative value in the future.

In a leading article the weekly of the Mission Covenant Church "Svensk Veckotidning" expresses its regret if the Baptists should isolate themselves from the free church fellowship of which the "associate congregations" are an expression.

500-600 More Hungarian Refugees Arrive in Sweden.

Last month the first batch of 200 tubercular Hungarian refugees from Austria and their relatives arrived in Sweden where the patients will be admitted to sanatories in the first place and later be assimilated into the community. The arrangement concerns altogether 500-600 people. Prior to this, Sweden has already received 7.000 refugees from Hungary.

The Commission which picked out the refugees in Austria will proceed to Greece in order to arrange for another 50 tubercular refugees and their relatives to be received in Sweden.